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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PRAGUE 001407

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SUBJECT: CZECHS ON OCT 3 GAERC

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Classified By: Political-Economic Counselor Michael Dodman for reasons
1.4 B+D

11. (C) Summary. The Czechs are optimistic that the upcoming GAERC will find a way forward on Turkey. The GOCR has formally stated that they support launching talks with Turkey without establishing a privileged partnership or other status as an option. They also insist that there is no linkage with Croatia, although remain strongly in favor of a decision on Oct 3 to launch accession talks, and at the working level complain about unequal standards being used to evaluate Croatia and Turkey. On other GAERC issues, the GOCR supports an EU decision to impose sanctions against Uzbekistan, will push for an EU consensus on next steps to induce Iranian nuclear cooperation, and wants to set a path towards accession for Serbia. End Summary.

Czechs Support EU Accession of Turkey, Croatia, and Serbia

12. (C) Pol-Econ Chief and Poloff met separately Sept 30 with Petr Kaiser, Director of the Czech MFA's CFSP Department, and JuraJ Fogada, Acting Director of the Department of EU Institutions, to discuss the Oct 3 GAERC. According to Fogada, the official Czech position on Turkey (stated by Deputy FM Mueller in Parliamentary testimony on Sept 29) is that the accession negotiations should begin on Monday and the outcome should remain open-ended. The GOCR does not support the Austrian position that an alternative to full membership needs to be stated in advance. However, Fogada restated previous GOCR views that full Turkish compliance with the customs union is essential (although the Czechs are content with the agreed compromise of compliance by late 2006), and Turkey must recognize Cypress before the conclusion of negotiations, not after. Fogada evidenced considerable frustration with Turkey's negotiating practice of repeatedly threatening to walk away from the negotiations, and complained that the GOT had done a poor job of making the security argument for why Turkey needed to be a part of the EU.

13. (C) CFSP Chief Kaiser deferred to his colleagues on accession questions, but readily accepted Poloff's point that the decision on launching negotiations with Turkey cannot be made without taking into consideration the strategic importance of Turkey. He added that there had been numerous pointed debates within the MFA in recent weeks over Turkey, which accounted for the more forward leaning official GOCR position on the question.

14. (C) On Croatia, Fogada confirmed that GOCR does not support linking Croatia's candidacy to Turkey. Yet in the same breath, he expressed the optimistic view that the GAERC meeting would result in the commencement of the Croatian negotiations, or at least positive steps forward in the process. He agreed that Croatia's full cooperation with the ICTY is imperative, but repeated the GOCR position that Gotovina's delivery to the ICTY should not be a prerequisite for progress on accession. Fogada also expressed frustration with what he saw as unequal standards being applied by some to the questions of Turkish and Croatian membership, i.e., the Croatians were expected to fully meet all requirements in advance of talks, but the Turks were able to negotiate a schedule for compliance with the obligations applied to them.

15. (C) In addressing accession, Kaiser added that the GOCR supports efforts to agree on a framework for Serbia's accession or on an Association Agreement. Serbia must not be left out of the EU for reasons of stability and security. As in the case of Croatia, Serbia must cooperate fully with the ICTY. The level that constitutes full compliance, however, must be reasonable, as deemed by the ICTY.

Czechs Favor Promoting Human Rights in Uzbekistan, Belarus,
and Russia

16. (C) Turning to other GAERC issues beyond accession (and Kaiser was optimistic that FMs would have time for other business) Kaiser said he expected tough EU action in Uzbekistan, noting that the Czechs and others are very aware that the previous Council decision on Uzbekistan was too weak. He said that while the GOCR supports some EU sanctions, it is concerned that sanctions may be ineffective,

as they have been in Belarus.

17. (C) Kaiser said the EU is uncertain how to handle the situation in Belarus. Currently, there is no official dialogue between the EU and the Belarussian government. Issues that may be considered at GAERC include whether the EU should monitor the upcoming elections in Belarus, and how the EU can influence the outcome. The GOCR continues to support civil society in Belarus.

18. (C) Addressing EU-Russian relations, Kaiser described the Czech approach as pragmatic: the EU must speak with one voice. The EU expects the Czechs and other Visegrad countries to put aside their history with Russia, and the Czechs are prepared to do that. However, western European powers that have focused solely on their economic ties with Russia also need to follow a common approach. The EU must consider common values, such as human rights, when negotiating with Russia. Kaiser expects difficulties renegotiating the EU-Russia agreement, which was negotiated 10 years ago. GOCR favors simply amending the existing agreement because it already addresses human rights issues. GOCR is concerned that a new agreement with Russia may not be tough enough on human rights.

Czechs Favor Referring Iran to the UN Security Council

19. (C) Turning to EU negotiations on Iran's nuclear program, Kaiser said a recent IAEA decision finding the Iranians out of compliance with their obligations requires referral of the issue to the UNSC. The question is what sort of penalty the UNSC ought to impose to entice Iranian cooperation. The GOCR believes something less than sanctions should be considered as a first step, and hopes that EU FMs will agree to open consultations with the USG and others on what sort of UN response is appropriate.
CABANISS